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Dear Dave: (1)

Thanks for taking the [redacted] trouble to look for books for me. [redacted] Thanks for The Summing Up, which I have received.

If Dale Edwards is so generous as to want to copy for me Mackey's Mathematical Foundations of Quantum Theory, he is ~~certait~~ certainly welcome to do so, and I'll be glad to receive the copy. If you'd like to give me his address I'll send him reimbursement and my thanks.

I'll send you the Cabeza de Vaca book next time I get to town — but please tell me where to send it. I gather you're

(2)

still in Lombard, and I don't know when you're going back to Texas.

Note spelling of apparently → e not a

~~One isn't supp~~

One isn't supposed to look a gift horse in the mouth, but I suppose you want the truth: I think Altamirano's Navidad en Las Montañas stinks. Apart from the fine descriptive passage at the beginning ~~[illegible]~~, the book is inept from a literary point of view, and as for the ideas it promotes, I have no use for a patronizing priest who tries to brainwash villagers into adopting bourgeois values.

(3)

You'll recall that Juan Valera regarded literature as mere entertainment, and considered the treatise rather than the ~~t~~ novel to be the proper vehicle for instruction. You'll also recall the passage ~~[illegible]~~ of Conrad I quoted for you recently, in which he argued that literature should not ~~[illegible]~~ be put up on a pedestal above more mundane occupations. Here is Maugham on the same subject: The Summing Up, Chapt. XXIV:

"There is no more merit in having read a thousand books than in having ploughed a thousand fields. There is no more merit in being able to attach a correct description to a painting than in being able to find out what is wrong with a stalled motor-car. In each case it is special knowledge. The stockbroker has his knowledge too and so has the artisan. It is a silly prejudice of the intellectual that his is the only one that counts. The True, the Good, and the Beautiful are not the perquisites of those who have been to expensive schools, burrowed in libraries, and frequented museums. The artist has no excuse when he uses others with condescension. He is a fool if he thinks his knowledge is more important than theirs and an oaf if he cannot meet them on an equal footing. Matthew Arnold did a great disservice to culture when he insisted on its opposition to philistinism."

— Ted (OVER→)

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~~[illegible]~~

But I will say this for literature: The better literature directs people's attention to aspects of human psychology, behavior, and feeling of which they might otherwise remain unaware because, even though they experience these things themselves and see them in other people, they don't take note of them or think about them. Valera is right in saying that these matters would be more effectively discussed in a treatise on psychology. But the trouble is that few people read treatises on psychology. But they do read novels, watch plays on television, and so forth. You know how I abhor the mass entertainment media. Nevertheless, I would guess that, because of those media, the average man today is more sophisticated about human psychology than he was 100 years ago. It's true that most of the trash on TV is unoriginal — the ideas are borrowed. But by borrowing the ideas from more serious writers, the script-writers have widely diffused these ideas, so that certain elementary psychological insights have become common property in our culture. This is my guess but I'm not sure there is more psychological sophistication today than in the past — sometimes in reading very old works you see that the writers had a very clear, modern-seeming insight into human motives. But to hell with TV anyway.

— Ted.

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